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2012 Edgar S. Furniss Book Award Winner

BOAZ ATZILI

"Accepting the Unacceptable: West Germany's Changing Border Policy, 1945-1990"

Monday, October 06, 2014, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43201

To view a recording of this event, [please click here](#).

To download the Mershon podcast, [please click here](#).

Boaz Atzili is a political scientist who researches and teaches international politics. His interest is in international security with an emphasis on territorial conflicts and the politics of borders, and the international aspects of state weakness and state failure. His research includes various cases from the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Atzili is also interested in the politics of the Middle East and, in particular, Lebanon and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Atzili's first book, *Good Fences, Bad Neighbors: Border Fixity and International Conflict* (University of Chicago Press, 2012) is winner of the Mershon Center's **Edgar S. Furniss Book Award**.

Atzili teaches courses on introduction to international relations, international security, and Arab-Israeli relations.

Abstract

How can one understand a country's recognition, or lack thereof, of new borders drawn as a result of war? During the past two decades, scholars have critically examined the political role of space and territory and advanced our understanding of borders with dynamic concepts based on identities and discourses. The literature, however, remains divided. While some works on states' territorial conceptions suggest the primacy of international norms, others stress dynamics that are endemic to the domestic arena.

In this talk, Boaz Atzili seeks to bridge the gap in the literature by studying the case of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and its policy's coming to terms with its territorial losses post World War II. He concentrates on German land east of the Oder-Neisse line, which was annexed by Poland and Russia in the Potsdam Conference of 1945. In the early years of the FRG, both policy and public discourse strongly opposed the acknowledgment and acceptance of the new border. By the time of Germany's reunification in 1990, however, the opposite was true. Today, even the remnants of the territorial revisionists in Germany are careful not to pronounce their territorial positions publicly. The pendulum of Germany's border discourse has now swung to the other side: Germany accepted the unacceptable.

Atzili uses this case study to develop a general theoretical argument about border politics in international relations, based on interaction between domestic politics and discourse, foreign policy, and international norms.

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